

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 EB-08 DOE-15 SOE-02
OES-09 IO-13 HA-05 ACDA-12 /144 W
-----042276 020718Z /14

R 020528Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHC 582
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 10442

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, ID, BG
SUBJECT: VISIT OF BANGLADESH PRESIDENT

REF: DACCA 4523

1. SUMMARY: BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIAUR RAHMAN VISITED INDONESIA JULY 27-29. IN ADDITION TO CUSTOMARY FORMALITIES, HE EXCHANGED VIEWS WITH PRESIDENT SUHARTO AND VICE PRESIDENT ADAM MALIK, CONSULTED WITH VARIOUS INDONESIAN MINISTERS, AND INSPECTED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, ALL OF WHICH RECEIVED FULL PUBLICITY LOCALLY. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE, A TRADE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND INDONESIA TO STIMULATE, BUT NOT NECESSARILY TO GUARANTEE, MORE DIRECT TRADE WHICH TO DATE HAS REMAINED SMALL. PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS AND THE OFFICIAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE EMPHASIZED CONCERN FOR REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY (BUT DID NOT MENTION A POSSIBLE
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FUTURE ROLE FOR BANGLADESH IN ASEAN)AS WELL AS THE NEED FOR INCREASED BILATERAL COOPERATION IN VARIOUS FIELDS. INDONESIA MAY PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT TECHNICAL TRAINING ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH IN MILITARY, OIL/NATURAL GAS, AND FAMILY PLANNING FIELDS. ALTHOUGH FLATTERED BY BANGLADESH'S APPEAL FOR USING SOME OF ITS DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE AND PLEASED BY BANGLADESH'S SUPPORT IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES

FOR INDONESIA'S INCORPORATION OF EAST TIMOR, INDONESIA WILL PROBABLY START AT THE SAME GOOD BUT OVERLY CLOSE LEVEL OF RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH. IN THE PAST IT HAS NEVER PARTICULARLY WARMED TO OVERTURES OF GREATER FRIENDSHIP BY SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES TOWARDS ITSELF OR TO ASEAN. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT ZIAUR RAHMAN OF BANGLADESH RECEIVED A WARM WELCOME ON HIS ARRIVAL IN JAKARTA JULY 27 FOR A 48-HOUR GOOD-WILL VISIT TO INDONESIA (REPORTEDLY HIS FIRST OFFICIAL TRIP ABROAD SINCE HE WAS FIRST ELECTED LAST YEAR.) A BANGLADESH EMBASSY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF AFTER THE VISIT THAT ZIA WAS FULFILLING A LONGSTANDING INVITATION FROM INDONESIA. ZIA HAD CHOSEN THIS ONE OVER OTHER POSSIBILITIES, HE SAID, BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL FEELINGS OF BROTHERHOOD BANGLADESH HAS FOR INDONESIA OWING TO ANCIENT TRADE, LINGUISTIC, AND CULTURAL TIES, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ISLAND OF SUMATRA. ALSO BANGLADESH THOUGHT THERE WERE MANY SIMILARITIES IN DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS BETWEEN THEIR TWO COUNTRIES, WITH A SPECIAL MENTION OF THE JAVANESE POPULATION DENSITY WHICH EQUATES TO THAT OF BANGLADESH.

3. THE 28-MEMBER PRESIDENTIAL PARTY INCLUDED MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS JAMALUDDIN AHMED, WHO SIGNED A TRADE AGREEMENT JULY 29 WITH INDONESIA INTENDED TO PROMOTE DIRECT TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. CURRENT TRADE AMOUNTS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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LESS THAN ONE MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR AND BECAUSE THE TRADE AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR NO CREDITS TO PRIVATE TRADERS, THE AGREEMENT IS VERBAL ENCOURAGEMENT ONLY FOR INCREASED TRADE. BANGLADESH HAS BEEN INTERESTED FOR SOME TIME IN INCREASING IMPORTS OF INDONESIAN CEMENT, FERTILIZER, TIMBER AND COAL. FOR ITS PART, IT HOPES TO SELL INDONESIA ITS JUTE, PAPER, FABRICS AND LIGHT INDUSTRY GOODS.

4. AT A STATE BANQUET HELD IN HIS HONOR THE FIRST EVENING, ZIAUR RAHMAN RECEIVED A GOLDEN KRIS FROM PRESIDENT SUHARTO, WHO EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT BANGLADESH PROBLEMS WITH BURMA, PARTICULARLY OVER REFUGEES, SEEMED TO BE MOVING TOWARD A SOLUTION. SUHARTO NOTED THE BASIS OF BANGLADESH-INDONESIAN FRIENDSHIP WAS THEIR BASIC ATTACHMENT TO ISLAM AS WELL AS THEIR SHARED VIEWS. HIS REMARKS AT THE BANQUET ALSO INCLUDED AN EXPLANATION OF THE AIMS OF THE ASEAN STATES. IN HIS RESPONSE, RAHMAN SAID HIS GOVERNMENT FULLY SUPPORTED UN RESOLUTIONS DECLARING THE INDIAN OCEAN A ZONE OF PEACE, AND HE URGED LITTORAL STATES AND OTHER NEARBY NATIONS TO GIVE THEIR SUPPORT TO THE CONCEPT AS WELL. BANGLADESH, HE ADDED, ALSO WANTED A REDUCTION IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARMAMENTS RACE. WHEN QUERIED AFTER THE VISIT ABOUT EARLIER

REPORTS OF BANGLADESH'S INTEREST IN JOINING ASEAN
OR PERHAPS HAVING OBSERVER STATUS, THE BANGLADESH EMBOFF
TOLD US THAT NOTHING WAS DECIDED ON THIS MATTER DURING
THE VISIT; HE SAID HIS OWN GOVERNMENT HAD NOT FULLY MADE
UP ITS MIND WHAT THIS RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE IN THE FUTURE.

5. ON JULY 28 PRESIDENT ZIA CONFERRED WITH PRESIDENT
SUHARTO AND VICE PRESIDENT ADAM MALIK WHILE ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL OFFICIALS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HELD THEIR OWN
JOINT DISCUSSIONS. ZIA ALSO HAD TALKS WITH MINISTER OF
DEFENSE AND SECURITY GENERAL JUSUF, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY
SOEHOED, AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY
DR. HABIBIE. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE LATER THAT DAY, ZIA SAID THE
VISIT HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL, AS SHOWN BY THE
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READINESS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES TO INCREASE COOPERATION IN
THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL FIELDS AND CONCLUDE
A TRADE AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD USHER IN A NEW ERA OF DIRECT
TRADE. HE SAID HE HAD INVITED PRESIDENT SUHARTO TO VISIT
BANGLADESH, BUT NO DATE HAD BEEN SET. A BANGLADESH CULTURAL
MISSION WOULD BE SENT TO INDONESIA, HE NOTED, AND
THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDONESIA TO PROVIDE BANGLADESH

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WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELDS OF FOOD AND FISHERY PRODUCTION AND RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRAINING OF BANGLADESH PERSONNEL. RAHMAN STATED THAT THERE WAS NO COMMUNIST THREAT IN HIS COUNTRY, AND HE DID NOT BELIEVE CUBA'S LEADING ROLE IN THE NAM WOULD CREATE ANY PROBLEMS FOR BANGLADESH.

6. IN ADDITION TO THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE THAT PRESIDENT ZIA MENTIONED ABOVE, BANGLADESH EMBOFF MENTIONED HIS COUNTRY'S DESIRE FOR INDONESIA'S EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD OF OFF-SHORE OIL EXPLORATION AS WELL AS ADVANCED METHODS OF NATURAL GAS EXPLOITATION AND IN THE FIELD OF FAMILY PLANNING. HE ANTICIPATED FUTURE DELEGATIONS WHICH WOULD DECIDE THE DETAILS OF SUCH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT BANGLADESH ALREADY HAS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE INDONESIAN ARMY AND AIR FORCE COLLEGES AND HOPES TO SEND MORE IN THE FUTURE.
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7. A JOINT COMMUNIQUE RELEASED JULY 29 EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER (NIEO), BILATERAL COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS TO STABILIZE PRICES AND INCREASE EXPORTS, AN INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE, AND INTERNATIONAL ARMS LIMITATION. ALSO MENTIONED WERE SUPPORT FOR THE ARAB STRUGGLE ABAINST ISRAELI AGGRESSION, COOPERATION AMONG ISLAMIC STATES, AND SUPPORT FOR AFRICANS FIGHTING RACISM, APARTHIED AND COLONIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE COMMUNIQUE NOTED PRESIDENT SUHARTO'S CONVICTION THAT A ZONE OF FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WOULD BE APPROVED BY ALL NATIONS.

8. COMMENT: THE VISIT RECEIVED WIDE PUBLICITY, INCLUDING FRONT PAGE TREATMENT, A SERIES OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS STRESSING THE AFFINITIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND GOOD TV COVERAGE. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE OVERALL IMPACT TO BANGLADESH/INDONESIAN RELATIONS TO BE MUCH MORE THAN THESE PUBLICITY COSMETICS, HOWEVER. IF ITS EMBOFF IS REPORTING ITS MOOD ACCURATELY, BANGLADESH ITSELF APPEARS VERY INTERESTED IN PROMOTING A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA AND TO INDONESIA. SLOWLY INCREASING TRADE AND POSSIBLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH COULD INDEED BROADEN ITS RELATIONSHIP TO INDONESIA IN THE FUTURE. BUT INDONESIA WILL PROBABLY IGNORE ANY STRONG OVERTURES, AS IT DID IN THE PAST FROM INDIA. IT SEEMS NOT TO VIEW ITSELF

AT ALL IN THE SOUTH ASIA CONTEXT IN SPITE OF THE ANCIENT
HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS; RATHER, IT CONCENTRATES ITS CLOSEST
RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE IMMEDIATE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION
AND PROBABLY DOES NOT SEEK NOR SUPPORT AT THIS STAGE AN
ASEAN GROUP THAT MOVED WEST TO EMBRACE BANGLADESH.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978JAKART10442
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780315-1100
Format: TEL
From: JAKARTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197808108/aaaadmus.tel
Line Count: 229
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2f118b58-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DACCA 4523
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1564382
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF BANGLADESH PRESIDENT
TAGS: PEPR, ID, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2f118b58-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014